

# Kimberley Jewry and its religious provision 1873 – 2020

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## **Kimberley has had two distinct communities with two different shuls.**

Above is a picture taken in about 2012 of the exterior of the Memorial Road Synagogue that was consecrated in 1902. Note the clear blue sky and the strong shadows of the two palm trees growing in the front, that nearly obscure the domes on either side. On the extreme right is a corner of the Communal Hall opened in 1950.

Until I started research for this Jewish Community website, I had no idea that Kimberley had had two distinct communities. I knew there were two shuls – the old little one and the new big one, right? How wrong I was! In fact, the small shul in Baronial Street was the newer one established in 1911 – while the big shul in Memorial Road had been consecrated nine years earlier in 1902.

## **So how did this all come about?**

**The first Kimberley community had originated from Western Europe** mainly from Britain and Germany. Diamonds have always been a Jewish preserve, so not surprisingly, scarcely had the digging and sifting of diamondiferous ground began when Jews descended on the diamond fields from 1867 onwards. Four years later in 1871 they had created an informal 'association' and in 1873 the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation was formally founded.

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At first, they worshipped in a hired Hall in Woodley Street. The Congregation's first synagogue was built in 1876. This was an unimposing wood and corrugated iron building and was already inadequate when it was completed. It was later demolished and no photograph of it exists.

As the community grew stronger and richer, they designed and built the magnificent new **Memorial Road Synagogue** opened for the High Holydays in September 1902.



Front door Key, Memorial Road Synagogue. Photograph by Kimberley born Shawn Benjamin

**The second Kimberley community was of immigrants from Eastern Europe** mainly Yiddish speaking, impoverished Jews, fleeing difficult economic and social conditions in the Russian Pale of Settlement, and seeking better opportunities for their families in the Western world. They were artisans and traders with tightly held religious observances. They were part of a miraculous migration of about three million Jews who managed to leave Eastern Europe and reach America and all parts of the British Empire in the 1880s and 90s and the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. About 50,000 reached South Africa. Thus they – and we all – escaped the horrors of wartime Europe and of the Holocaust. They made their mark contributing considerably, in all fields of endeavour, to the places in which they eventually settled. They did not feel comfortable with the type of Anglo-German worship in the new Synagogue's opulent surroundings. They longed for a simpler house of prayer.

Gus Habermeld, (who was born in Kimberley in 1904) explained: "When they built the Memorial Road shul for the benefit of the English Jews in 1902, they built the Zionist Hall in Hellenic Street where the Eastern European Jews preferred to worship in the way they were accustomed.

'In my childhood there were three places of worship. Our family first used to go to the Zionist Hall service, on a Friday night, come home, make kiddush and have dinner etc.' Gus continued: 'Where we lived in Bultfontein Road, it was more or less a Jewish ghetto. There were Jewish shopkeepers all the way around, there was a milk dairy there, at the back of the dairy, the man who used to run it had a bit of a cheder, (maybe that was Mr Jack Maresky - see the link to the Maresky story at the end). Opposite the dairy, we had a kosher butchery, we had all little shops, Yiddish shops, around

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there, and they were all more or less what were called the 'greener' congregation.' Gus explained further: 'Then in 1911 the 'greeners' got together, there was a Mrs Cohen who had a plot of ground, and they built the Greener (or Grinna) **Shul, in Baronial Street**. Its official name was the **Beth Hamedrash Linas Hatzedek**. Thereafter they used to hold services there on Friday nights, and on Yom Tovim. I don't think they held services on Saturday morning as most people had to open their businesses on Saturday.

'They did not have ministers there, only lay readers. In the early days there were Steinberg and Baruch Leib. Later there was Lipi Weinstein. One was a shoemaker; one was a glazier; and Lipi was a tailor. I think the greeners had a more intimate relationship with Jewish life than the others, that is how I saw it. And by the way, we did not class ourselves as 'greeners'!



Above: The Baronial Street Synagogue in the 70s or 80s when it was no longer in use.(it would be nice to have a picture of the interior and in its heyday. Can anyone find one I wonder?)

It seems like there was no deep division – that there was actually just one 'congregation': the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation – that all belonged to – only with different modes and places of worship, depending on the origin of the community members. There was no animosity. This division seems to have been the same in most places in South Africa. **As time went on, the two groups integrated.** In the 1940s to 1960s the '**Grinne**' Shul was used for the congregation's weekday services for those requiring a minyan to say kaddish, and the 'big' synagogue was used

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for the Sabbaths and Holidays. In the 1980s and '90s the Baronial Street building was sold and became a storeroom for a Jewish business (Klein Brothers). Subsequently it was demolished.

Go to the 'Synagogue' page <https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Synagogues.html> for more details of both of these synagogues.

### The Key to Baronial Street Synagogue

Gwynne Robins, née Schrire sent me a picture of the key (on the right) presented to her great grandfather **Raphael Rodes Senderowitz** at the opening of this Beit Hamedrash on 17 September, 1911. (He was a wealthy merchant in Beaconsfield who had clearly been instrumental in, and had supported, the shul's construction. He died in 1918). The inscription on this key says: **Beth Hamedrash Linas Hatzedek Kimberley, Opened by R Senderovitz 24 Elul 5671 (18.9.1911)**

Gwynne who lived in Kimberley from 1946 to 1951 said: I knew nothing about the key – or the building to which the key belonged until you (Geraldine) sent the article about the 'Grinne' Shul. The key was found when I was clearing out the contents of the Old Jewish Museum that the new SA Jewish Museum did not want, and it was given to me. It had been presented to the museum by my grandmother Sarah Neche Schrire (née Senderovitz). I gave the key to my son, who is the chairman of a Cape Town shul, and placed it in a frame made by my other great grandfather.



It's so great that this key has been properly preserved.

I thought it was the only remnant of the synagogue – until February 2022, when Cyril Salkinder wrote to me to say that his father, Louis Salkinder, had **bought the benches** from the Grinna Shul when it closed down. He has restored a four-seater which features prominently in his TV room. Thanks for the picture (left) Cyril. What happened to the rest of the benches I wonder, and the ark etc? .

## Kimberley Jews and religious provision in the 1870s and 1880s

As we have said, in the 1870s and 1880s Jews were already well represented in the digger community and nearly half the brokers and buyers were Jews. There were also Jews who ran transport to the fields and who traded goods and services. They also took a prominent role in the social life of the diggings and emerging city. They featured significantly in boxing, racing, theatre, and other entertainments as well as in journalism.

It followed that they met and formed a congregation for divine service, praying in homes which were no more than tents. As early as 1871 a tentative congregation was set up, called the Griqualand West Jewish Association. Among its members (later to become millionaires) were Isaac Lewis, Woolf Joel, and Lionel Phillips.

A corrugated iron building in Woodley Street was hired and filled to overflowing with worshippers for the High Holydays. This was on the initiative of **Joel Myers** (a pioneer of the domestication of ostriches in Oudtshoorn) supported by **Rev Joel Rabinowitz**, the Minister in Cape Town (pictured below) who sent up festival prayer books and a Shofar as a gift from the mother community.

**There was no regular minister**, and Kimberley Jews had to rely on the infrequent visits of Rabbis from Cape Town and Port Elizabeth for circumcisions and marriages. High Holydays services were conducted by lay members. It is on record that there was an unscrupulous self-styled 'rabbi' engaged in these early times, who had to be dismissed – and who revenged himself by sitting at the door of his tin habitation near the synagogue publicly desecrating the Day of Atonement by eating forbidden food in sight of the congregation.

## 1873 The First Permanent Congregation

**The Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation** was formally established, with services continuing to take place in the hired hall in Woodley Street. Even then they had no full-time minister.

When **Rev Samuel Rappaport** from Port Elizabeth visited in 1874 the *Diamond News* felt obliged to comment. 'We are astonished,' it exclaimed, 'that considering the number of Jewish residents in our midst, that they have not a regularly ordained minister, and a properly constructed place of worship'. Clearly those who had come to Kimberley had other priorities! However, plans were, already in place for building a synagogue and appointing a minister.

## 1876 The First Synagogue Building

In 1875 work began on the first properly constructed place of worship. The site of the synagogue was in Dutoitspan Road roughly where Cecil John Rhodes statue now stands. (There is no picture of the synagogue which was demolished to make way for the statue. The picture on the right is of Rhodes' statue unveiling in 1907).



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The site of the first synagogue had been given to the community by the London and South African Exploration Company a syndicate of the old Hopetown Company headed by Henry Webb, Edgar Hurley and Jews, **Louis Hond**, and the **Lillienfeld bothers**. The company was a major owner of Diamondiferous property in Kimberley including the Bultfontein and Dutoitspan Mines, later taken over by De Beers Consolidated Mines in the amalgamation of all the mines by 1888.

The Cornerstone for this first synagogue was laid with all due ceremony on 23 August 1875 by **Mrs C Sonnenberg**, wife of the first president of the congregation. The event was attended by many Christian friends amongst them civic dignitaries such as **Sir Henry Barkly** (Governor of the Cape Colony) and Sir **Richard Southey** (Administrator of the Diamond Fields).

The building, like all buildings in the town was a simple wood and corrugated iron structure designed to hold 250 people. When it was consecrated on 17 September 1876, it was already too small! (There were about 1400 Jewish souls in Kimberley by then, 600 of them adult males.)

### Ministers 1875 – 1927

#### 1875 – 1878            **The First Minister, Rev Berthold Albu**

Rev Berthold Albu was installed as the first spiritual leader of the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation in the run-up to the opening of the first purpose-built synagogue. He served for the next three years and was the minister who consecrated the first synagogue in 1876. He was probably related to the South African mining magnates Sir George and Leopold Albu. (Margaret Albu, grand-daughter of Reverend Albu, was a concert pianist. In 1931 she married John Logie Baird, inventor and developer of the world's first television system.)

#### 1878 – 1884            **Rev Meyer Mendelssohn**

It became the practice of the Kimberley Community as with other established South African communities to receive British trained ministers as recommended by the British Chief Rabbi for the colonies. Mendelssohn was chosen by the then Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, Dr Nathan Adler, to replace Rev Albu in Kimberley. He made a terrific impact on the community. Born in 1833, he was distantly related to the composer and his famous grandfather the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn. He had arrived in Britain from Germany in 1850 at the age of 17.

After completing his studies in 1855, he became the minister of Exeter Hebrew Congregation at the age of 22, where he remained for the next 23 years. He served in Kimberley for six years until he retired from the ministry in 1884, though he returned from time to time until his death in 1889, eg after the untimely death of his successor Rev Ornstein. His son Sydney prospered on the diamond fields.

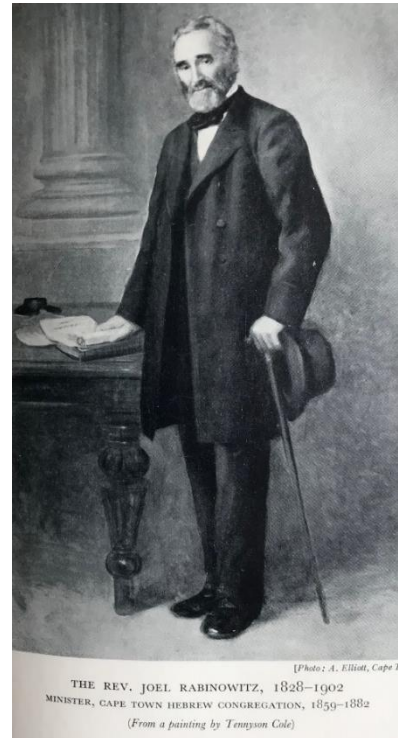
Sydney is named for the mining township Sydney-on-Vaal which he founded. He was a great philanthropist and a great collector of Africana. His famous collection was given to the Parliament in Cape Town. Sydney Mendelssohn later presented the Memorial Road Synagogue with the

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brass and enamel plaque, in its foyer commemorating Jewish soldiers who fought for the British in the Boer war. The inscription was in honour of his father Rev Meyer Mendelssohn and also his daughter Ruby who was sadly drowned in the sinking of the Drummond Castle in 1896). (Memorials like this were to show how patriotic the Jews were, in taking up arms for king and country)

### 1884 Rev Joel Rabinowitz (right)

Rev Joel Rabinowitz came to minister in Kimberley for a time after he had retired from service in Cape Town and had returned from a visit to England. Rev Rabinowitz had served the Cape Town community from 1859 to 1882. He was the first properly ordained head of the Jewish Community in South Africa. When he arrived in South Africa, he ministered not only to the small Cape Town community, but travelled around the colony providing occasional services wherever required and got to know the hinterland and its Jews. (After retirement he trained as an assayer and went to Johannesburg to work on the goldfields – possibly doing weddings and brisses on the side.)



### 1884 – 1885 Rev Abraham Ornstein

Rev Abraham Ornstein was a nephew of the Cape Town minister AF Ornstein. In the words of the Kimberley historian, George Beet, this young man of 21 'literally worked himself to death'. Described by Dr Matthews (also a non-Jew) as a young man of infinite charm and capability. Ornstein was full of enthusiasm and threw himself into his duties with great zeal and conscientiousness. He died a year after his appointment in June 1885 at the tender age of 22. Reference to the marriage register of the day reveals the rather poignant fact that he was married to a young girl of 18, named Bessie Cohen only six months prior to his death. The marriage ceremony had been performed by his uncle, the Rev AF Ornstein of Cape Town. He had so endeared himself to his congregants and other sections of the town that he was given a public funeral and the magnificent tombstone which adorns his grave was erected by public subscription by members of all denominations. **Rev Mendelssohn** (see above) stepped in again to fill the breach.

### 1886-1888: Rev Mark L Harris

Mark Harris served for two years until his departure for Johannesburg. In January 1888, the newly formed Witwatersrand Hebrew Congregation purchased two plots of land on President Street to build a synagogue. On November 7 of that year 1888, the Rev Mark L Harris of Kimberley laid the cornerstone and the work on Johannesburg's first synagogue officially began. He was subsequently appointed the first Rabbi there and stayed until 1898. There was some controversy during his 'reign'.

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**1890-1927: Rev Harris Isaacs** there seems to have been a 'gap' in ministers between 1888 and 1890 when Rev Issacs was brought out from London. **He served the Kimberley community for 33 years over a period of 37 years from 1900 - 1927.**

After serving for just three or four years in Kimberley, Isaacs too seems to have felt the lure of gold, and he and his family left for Johannesburg in 1893 or 94.

Rev Harris Isaacs had been enticed to be the Minister of a brand new synagogue the Park Street Synagogue which had opened in Johannesburg in 1891 – just two years after the first one, and was just as opulent. This new Park Street Johannesburg synagogue was built by those dissatisfied with the first Shul in President Street which had opened just two years earlier in 1889 and displeased with Rev Mark L Harris (who had been poached from Kimberley to be their minister). We are not sure what prompted Rev Harris Isaacs to return to Kimberley in 1898. But return he did. In the meantime there was:



### **(1897-1898: Rev E M Jaffe)**

Rev Jaffe served in Kimberley for a short while. This must have been while Rev Harris Isaacs had absented himself in Johannesburg. Jaffe's signature is on marriage certificates in Kimberley in 1897 and 1898. He went to Pretoria after Kimberley. He was in Pretoria by the end of 1898. He served the Pretoria Hebrew Congregation until 1902. Rev Jaffe is recorded as being the minister for Rev Sliom's daughter's wedding in February 1899 in Pretoria. Rev Jaffe's handwriting is no longer in the Pretoria Ketubas after Jan 1902. We are not sure where he went after Pretoria. It would seem that he sat out the Boer War in Pretoria and moved on once the hostilities had ended. (Information by Juan-Paul Burke)

**Rev Harris Isaacs** returned to Kimberley and attended to the needs and wants of the community with unflagging zeal and devotion for the next 30 years until his retirement in 1927.

Harris Isaacs was a great scholar and brilliant orator. He took an active interest in civic as well as Jewish affairs. He had a deep interest in education and collected funds for establishing the Stockdale Street School and was for many years the Vice Chair of the Kimberley School Board. He was mentioned in dispatches for his services to the town during the Siege of Kimberley 1899-1900.



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In this wonderful picture below, of Rev Harris Isaacs and his wife and their 10 children taken in Kimberley in about 1910, we see:



*Standing – L-R: Ruby, Seymour [tbc], Leonard [tbc], Zephyrine (who married Julius Sacks of Kimberley)*

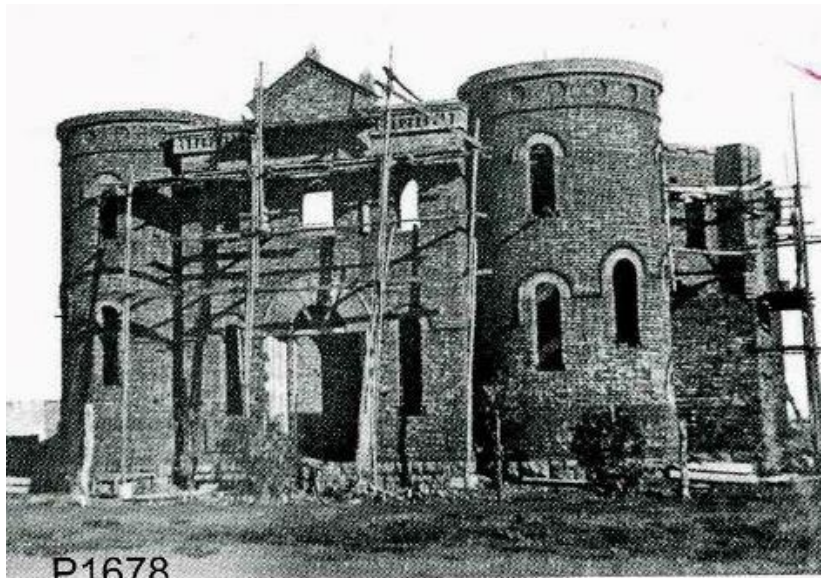
*Seated on chairs –Henry [tbc], wife Bella, Philip, Rev Harris Isaacs, Solomon Seated on floor – Robert, Ethel, David*

Read the full story of Rev Harris Isaacs on the website, See links at the bottom of this article.

### The 'New' Synagogue Memorial Road

**1901 – 1902** As the diamond community grew stronger and richer, building began on a larger synagogue on a new site in **Memorial Road** donated by the De Beers Consolidated Mining

Company – of which several of the hon officers of congregation, such as **Gustave Bonas, David Harris** and **Barney Barnato**, were directors, or otherwise closely associated, especially as buyers. Here is a rare picture from the SA Perm Building Society, of it **under construction**.



A picture of the Synagogue under construction in 1902.

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Rev Harris Isaacs supervised the building of the Memorial Road synagogue through the siege of Kimberley and the Boer War. Each bit of building material required a military stamp!

The cornerstone of the new synagogue, designed by Kimberley's finest architect WD Greatbach, was laid by the President of the community Mr **Gustave Bonas** (pictured right). It was said that it was 'in great measure, due to his exertions, that the Jews of Kimberley are erecting such a splendid house of prayer in one of the best parts of town.

Bonas had been for many years, alternate president of the community with Col David Harris, CMG (who had served under General Warren in 1885, and in various native wars; prominent in the defence of Kimberley in 1899-1900 – and was a Director of De Beers) (See Harris's death and funeral in 1942 described below by Rev Bernard Wulf)



You can read more about Gustave Bonas himself, a member of the original diamond syndicate, on the 'Pioneers' page (link below). Bonas seems to have left Kimberley that same year. He sold his beautiful house Lilianville, in Lodge Road (below) also designed by Greatbach, later called Dunluce by John Orr who bought it from him in 1902 of the Kimberley Jewish Community website. (Link on the last page of this article)



### The Memorial Road Synagogue opens on 14 September 1902

On Erev *Rosh Hashanah*, 14 September 1902 the magnificent Memorial Road Synagogue was consecrated by **Rev Harris Isaacs**. Since then, it has been in continual use, celebrating every shabbat and Holy Day. A small Hall was built in the grounds, for cheder and kiddushim. It was at first called the Victoria Hall. But after a new communal hall was opened in 1950, it is now known as the Minor Hall. Today in 2022, this Minor Hall is the home of a wonderful Jewish nursery school started by Miriam Klein, wife of Mike in the 70s or 80s, celebrating the chagim – though there is not a Jewish child, and hardly even a white one in sight!.



The picture above is probably from its first decade about 1910-12? Below is the interior of the shul

And now, February 2022, the grand Memorial Road Synagogue that has celebrated the high holidays for 119 years, is still active each shabbat and on festivals, serving the remaining handful of members of the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation and surrounding areas. (Although it was sadly temporarily shut down in parts of 2020 and 21 due to the Coronavirus pandemic).

Here is how **Jono David**, one of the photographers on the Website described it:

“The octagonal house of worship was consecrated in September 1902 and features prominent front turret-like stairwells, complementing spires, and interlaid zipper-like stonework at the corners. It’s a cross between an English castle and a French chateau...and a synagogue. Inside, all eyes are drawn to what is surely one of the most comely of Aron Hakodeshes in all the Jewish world. It seems to tower above the eight folds of the ceiling, if that were possible, capped by gorgeous domes which give the holy ark a notably spiritual aura. From a photographic point of view, a synagogue like this one is fun to photograph because there are many nooks and crannies and unexpected angles.

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**The first marriage** solemnised in the 'new' synagogue, on 11 January 1903 was that of Aaron Rauff to Selina Satisfsky. There have been numerous weddings in the Kimberley shul. See pictures on the website under family weddings (links at the end.) The most recent was in September 2019 when Barney Horwitz daughter, Ida married Zack Lieberman.



Above is the empty of the interior by one of the many photographers of this very photogenic building. You can see several galleries of pictures by clicking the photographers' names

The picture right, is of the silver replica first given to Gustave Bonas in October 1902 for the work he did in having the synagogue situated, planned, designed and built. His name is on the Foundation stone. (This replica has had an exciting past – landing up in a London pawn shop and once returned, again stolen – before being safely deposited in the Jewish Museum in Cape Town). You can read about this in Rev Silberhaft's book (see link at the end).

You can read more descriptions of the beautiful synagogue, and take a tour of the synagogue on the synagogue page of the website



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Above we see the synagogue in all its glory in September 2019 for the first wedding in 30 years (Ida Horwitz, daughter of the Congregation Chairman Barney Horwitz, to Jack Lieberman of Johannesburg).

### The sale of the site of the very first synagogue to De Beers

(De Beers, after Cecil Rhodes' death in March 1902, was desirous of having the site of the original synagogue to erect a fitting equestrian statue to Rhodes.

The story goes that they were having trouble acquiring the site, but fortunately the ever generous and fair-minded **Alfred Beit** associate and admirer of Rhodes and a Life Governor of De Beers (from a Jewish family in Hamburg) arrived on a visit to the city in 1903.

On hearing of the problem he told his fellow De Beers Directors – 'leave it to me'. The next day he arrived with the deeds to the property. When asked how he managed, he said 'I was taken to view the site. I approved of it and bought it from the owners for a high price'. So, it was win-win all round.

It seems both synagogue sites were donated – but they 'sold' the first one for a high price to De Beers?) I urge you to read the remarkable Alfred Beit story 'Alfred Beit: The right man in the right place at the right time' (See the end for the link)

## Ministers to the Kimberley Communities from the 1920s

### 1925-1955 Rev Chaim Goldberg

For 30 years Rev Goldberg served the community as mohel, shochet, teacher and assistant reader. He was a stable fixture in the community and a good friend and support to all the Reverends and Rabbis that came in his time.

But he was never asked to be the main incumbent.

You can read Leon Chonin's tribute to Rev Goldberg. See his name on Families or the end of this article for the link:



### 1928-1973 Lipi Weinstein

Lipi Weinstein (left) was the de facto prayer leader in the Grinne Shul for an unbroken 45 years. Later when the two communities merged (daily services in Baronial Street and Shabbat and Holidays in Memorial Road) he supported all the Rabbis in the main shul.

You can read Leon Chonin's tribute to his grandfather Lipi Weinstein too

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### 1930-1932 Cantor: Rev A Rudy

The picture above is headed

#### **Cantor A Rudy & Choir of the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation 1930-1932**

and the choristers are:

**Back Row:** Lionel Apter, S Klein, Abe Goldberg, I Levin, G Fine, M Lazarus, H Mehl

**Front Row:** Issie Goldberg (soloist), Harry Klein, M Want, Cantor the Rev A Rudy, N Brayton (Choirmaster)

**M Rudy, Mendel Apter Centre Front:** Shim Maresky

The picture was sent by Issie Goldberg's nephew. We see that Kimberley had a Shul Choir in the early 1930s – which included Issie, who was the soloist. Also in the choir, were two Klein brothers and two Apters. I don't recall families with the other names. Who remembers that we had a shul choir at all? Who remembers a Cantor A Rudy in 1930-1932 – or indeed any cantor – and a choirmaster - Mr N Brayton? JP Burke tells me that Cantor A Rudy thereafter went to Germiston 1933-1937 and in 1940 was ministering in Fordsburg-Mayfair.

### 1927 – 1935 Reverend Maurice Konviser

Rev Maurice Konviser succeeded **Rev Harris Isaacs** in 1927. Specially chosen by the chief Rabbi of Great Britain Joseph Hertz, he was sent to Kimberley aged just 25. By all accounts he was an exceptional young man. He threw himself into his duties. He invigorated the community spiritually and culturally and impressed the town with his dedication, his integrity, his oratory, his writings and his all-round ability, charm and desire to take things forward wherever he could.

He served the Kimberley community for eight years, to 1935. He was then called to lead the Salisbury Hebrew Community in Southern Rhodesia (at the time). Rev Konviser became a

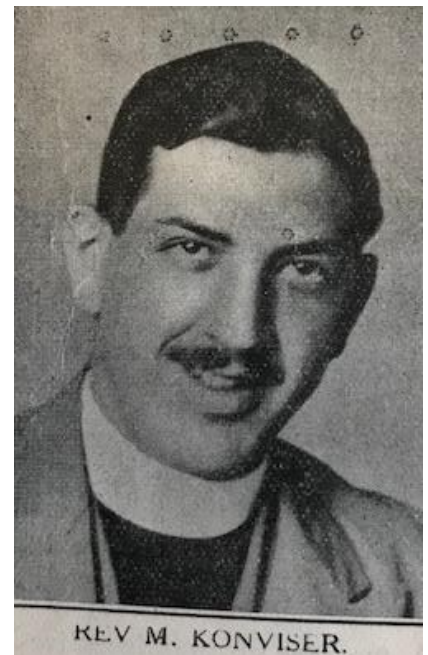
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fullblown Rabbi for Salisbury and subsequently Chief Rabbi of Rhodesia and was awarded an OBE. (Apparently, Rhodes had once said: 'If the Jews come, my country will be alright!')

You can read more about his Kimberley sojourn – at the links at the end of this article – of his opening West End Cemetery in 1929 with William

Sagar and being the minister to the Mayor of Kimberley, Barney Cohen in 1931.

Konviser's story also includes the Kimberley entries for the **South African Jewish Yearbook of 1929** It shows that the community had a Jewish Guild for entertainment dances plays and social events. There were several committees and Rev Konviser was active in them all. It's wonderful to have the names of all the committees and their members in 1929. Click the link above to see them. On his retirement from Rhodesia, he served at the Gardens Shul in Cape Town for two years.

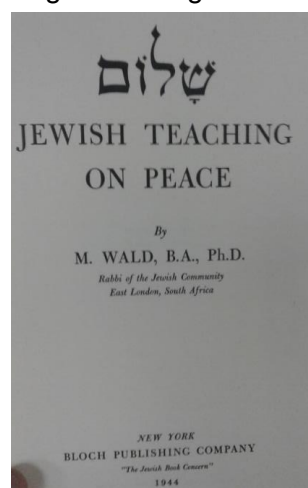
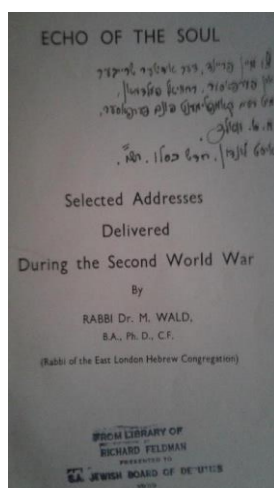


### 1935 – 1938 Rabbi Dr Marcus Wald

Rabbi Wald was born in Cluj, Hungary in 1906, to Rabbi Jacob and Pearl Wald. One of 8 children, he grew up in an atmosphere of old-world Jewish Orthodoxy, in the Chassidic tradition but in a very diverse and intellectual and cultural Jewish environment.

Rev Wald's brother was the renowned sculptor, Herman Wald. In 1928 Herman graduated from the Budapest Academy with distinction and went to Vienna to join the studio of the famous Anton Hanock. He then went to Berlin to work and study with Totilla. The rise of Hitlerism, however, made it advisable for him to leave, and he went to Paris. From there he went, in 1933, to London. By the end of 1933, he had obtained a post at the Working Men's College, teaching sculpture. His own work won him praise and encouragement from Jacob Epstein.

His brother Marcus invited Herman to come to South Africa, and Herman immigrated in 1937 on one of the last boats of refugees fleeing Nazi Europe. He settled in Johannesburg, where he



established a studio, and met Vera Rosenbaum, whom he married in 1942, and had three children. The Jewish learning which Marcus Wald received from his father and religious teachers left a deep impression on his life and work. He was the author of two books:

WALD, M. 1944. Shalom Jewish teaching on peace. New York: Bloch Pub. Co. (A copy at UCT)  
WALD, M. 1945. Echo of the soul: selected addresses delivered during the Second World War.



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In 1960, Rabbi Marcus Wald's brother Herman Wald was commissioned by Harry Oppenheimer, to design and erect two fountains in memory of his father, the late Sir Ernest Oppenheimer.

One was in Kimberley, the "Diamond Diggers", situated in the Oppenheimer Memorial Garden (right) in the Kimberley Civic Center (built on the grounds of the

cleared Malay Camp).

Herman Wald also designed the Holocaust Memorial at West Park Cemetery in Johannesburg. After his three-year stay in Kimberley, Marcus Wald went to be the Rabbi in East London. (Information supplied by Juan-Paul Burke).

### 1939 – 1945 Rev Woolf Yesorsky

As it was wartime, Rev Yesorsky enlisted in 1941 and served as Chaplain to the 2<sup>nd</sup> South African division in the Middle East until 1943 when he returned to his post until he took a position in Bulawayo in 1945. He was a tolerant and learned man who was much in demand as a lecturer both in English and Hebrew in Bulawayo. Rev Yesorsky and Rabbi Cassel of the Reform

Congregation in Bulawayo got on well together. Rabbi Cassel (born in Frankfurt) never failed to attend the second day of Yamin Tovim in the Orthodox shul. In time Rev Yesorsky got 'smichah' and became a rabbi. Among the many dignitaries who attended his induction were all the Christian clergymen of the town. In 1964 it is said that Rabbi Yesorsky committed suicide in a most horrific way. (I have not found out any more about this statement). The community buried him with all the honours due to a spiritual leader – virtually the whole community followed him to his last resting place in Bulawayo.



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1941 – 1943

Rev Bernard Wulf



Bernard Wulf served in Kimberley for two years during the war. I knew nothing about him – but reading the transcript of an interview with him from the archives at UCT, I about 1985, I have learned what a forward-thinking and interesting man he was.

A graduate of the famous Ponewyz Yeshiva in Lithuania, he came to South Africa as a very young, qualified Rabbi in 1925. He served smaller congregations like Carnarvon and Victoria West before going to Upington for eight years. Bernard Wulf married an Upington girl, Mollie Nurick, who's mother Sally Sarah Nurick (née Goldberger) was born in Kimberley. Sarah's sister Dora married Maurice Friedman of Kimberley and her sister Julia Goldberger of Kimberley married Adolf Friedlander, the brother of my grandmother Amalie Bergman (née Friedlander). Mollie's father Abram Nurick was a

well-to-do businessman in Upington. Rev Wulf and Mollie went back to Upington afterwards. His time in Kimberley was truly special as he relates.

He said: 'Kimberley always had ministers provided by England, trained at Jews College. Kimberley tried to maintain the same status, the same type of congregation as Gardens Shul, because the original congregants were English pioneers there, the Oppenheimers, Harrises, Barnatos and all that history. And then they had an advert in the paper they were looking for somebody with my qualifications. I applied and it turned out to be a temporary position at the time when a minister that they had brought out from England (Rev Yesorsky) joined the forces and went 'up North' as a Chaplain. I took it on, and we got on very well together. I was the first from Eastern Europe who

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occupied the pulpit in that shul, beautiful shul (above), the most beautiful shul in South Africa. Somehow, I fitted in and gained their respect.

### He describes the situation he found in Kimberley

'There were three types of Jews in Kimberley. There was still a remnant of Jews who used to talk about Rev Harris Isaacs of 50 years ago and there were the Eastern Europeans, my fellow immigrants from Poland and other parts, older than me of course who came out long before, and there were quite a number of local born.

Somehow or other, I managed to fit in with all sections of the community and we got on very well together.' I wonder if anyone remembers Rev Wulf or has any photographs of him?

### Rev Bernard Wulf's adventures as Chaplain to the Air Force

Rev Wulf describes his time in the Army: 'There was a big Air Force camp in Kimberley, and I was made the Jewish Chaplain and given the rank of Captain. I organised services and other facilities for the boys there and I got to know them each one and I took a lot of interest in them as well as generally in the city. 'The army was very cooperative. Every Friday night the Air Force boys used to come in full force to shul and during the week when I used to go there to give services, they were all available and I had good attendances. I used to give the other Chaplains a chance to come to my services, the Methodist ministers and so on ... in this respect I would like to tell you a little incident.



'One evening I arrived for service and there was a YMCA hall which had various rooms. We the Jewish boys were supposed to assemble at a certain room. When I came, I found that most of the congregants were on duty and I only had 3 or 4 Jewish recruits, so we started talking. While we were talking, I noticed a sergeant passing by up and down, eventually he came up to me: I was in uniform, which for me had Mogen Dovid on my cap and epaulettes and he saluted. He said Sir may I speak to you, I said certainly what can I do for you? He said we of the Dutch Reform Church assembled in room so-and-so, but our padre Bekker has not turned up, will you take our service?

'I looked at him and said you realise to what denomination I belong, he says yes, I know, and you know the best attendance you had was from the Afrikaners, so I said to the boys in my room, the 3, 4 boys "Come on" let's see what we can do.

'So I came into the room and they all stood up and I introduced myself, I could have done it in Afrikaans but by that time I was quite fluent in English. I had my set service, so I said to them you can sing any of your Psalms that you know and then we will carry on. They sang a Psalm, I read to them another Psalm, I addressed them on the goodwill, the usual address in war years, what we are up to and what we are trying to achieve by doing this, and it turned out to be quite successful evening, half an hour, they all filed by past me and saluted, and thanked me.

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To take part in inter-denominational services was not uncommon, we often used to come together in services for the soldiers on parade ... but to be directly delivering a non-Jewish service was something else!

### Death and Funeral of Colonel Sir David Harris (b London, 1852)

Rev Bernard Wulf related his experience of something else, which he says does not happen to every Jewish minister. He explained: 'Colonel Sir David Harris, KCMG, was a well-accepted Jew in his day, He was a Director of De Beers when it was formed. He was also the Colonel of the Kimberley Regiment and had been in the Parliament.

When I came, he was about 90, paralysed, sitting either in a chair or in bed. I used to visit him very, very often, at least once a week and we became quite friendly. Contrary to other pioneer Jews like the Oppenheims and so forth, he kept to his Jewish faith and remained in Kimberley. [His marriage to Rosa Gabriel had been the first Jewish wedding solemnised in Kimberley in 1873 even before there was a synagogue.] He was very much Jewish in his behaviour and so on and eventually he became very ill. One afternoon, the nurse said to me, it looks to me like we are coming to the end. People called me when there was a death any time day or night, so I said to her don't hesitate to call me.



'I was called at about five o'clock the following morning, (23 September 1942). I actually held his hand while he died, I said a prayer, his daughter was with him, his daughter was married out of faith. She turned round to me and said Mr. Wulf I married out of faith, but I'd like my father to have a proper Jewish funeral, I said certainly.

'Now in all the years of my service I have spoken on all different types of occasions, but I made up my mind from the first day never to prolong a funeral. I never delivered an oration, whoever it is, I looked for opportunities at later dates, maybe the shiva house, maybe at a special memorial service and so on, so I said certainly, I immediately phoned the Chevra Kadisha to make arrangements but everything got stuck, the minute his death was announced – they came.....'

He said: 'I don't know if I was right, it depends on which way you look at it. He was Colonel, pre-Boer War and so on, he was an ex-Member of Parliament a man of great standing and all wanted to give him honour, and they came together, the Mayor from his side, the Army from the other side, they wanted to give him a military and civic funeral.

Reverend Wulf had to think on his feet how to marry, without offence to either, the Jewish requirements and the honour the military and civic authorities wanted to pay to this great and popular soldier, statesman, politician, financier and Jew.

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'Now what does that consist of: the Mayor, the Councillors and so on, in all their robes following the hearse: the military wanted to give a company of soldiers with a band, now this gave me a bit of a shock, I did not know what to do, if it means giving honour to a Jew – and through this perhaps we can bring together closer the Jewish sections, the Jews and the non-Jews, and they want to honour a Jew, I said all right we will do it. They said, we want three days to organise it, so they were organising this.

I stipulated that the pall bearers, from the house to the hearse, and from the hearse, I mean the Chevra Kadisha will do their job as usual. I followed the hearse in the car and then followed the military and the Mayor and Civic Dignitaries and the band, all this, down to the cemetery the pall bearers even non-Jews until the gates of the cemetery.



'Once we arrived at the cemetery gates (left) I insisted the Chevra Kadisha must take over. It was quite an occasion, quite an occasion, and I said to them I am not going to make any oration I do not want to treat Sir David in any other way than any other Jew, but I said to the Mayor, the City Council can organise a memorial service two weeks later or so, they had a daily newspaper there, advertise as much as you can, and we organised a memorial service two weeks later in the shul, in the synagogue, and there I will deliver my oration. And that is what we did ... this is something maybe a minister of a big congregation will not have this opportunity. As I say it gave me a bit of a sleepless night, I know in certain respects I am not doing right, but I had to weigh the pros and cons. I thought to myself ... it was a very trying time, (1942) we had the Nazis working, we did not know what's happened to our people and this gave us an opportunity to bring us together.'

What a brave and forward-thinking man. I am sure he did absolutely the right thing.

### Rev Israel Segal, Died 1945 ?

There is a tombstone in the Kimberley cemetery of Rev Israel Segal. He died 1945. I had not heard of a Rev Segal officiating in Kimberley, so it was a mystery to me who he was and why he was buried in Kimberley. This has now been solved. Anthonette Salkinder wrote in June 2020: In your last newsletter, you mentioned Rev Segal, and that there was no information on him. He was my mother-in-law, Fanny Salkinder's father. The late Louis Salkinder's brother, Dr Joe Salkinder had introduced Fanny Segal to Louis Salkinder. After a quick courtship they were married in 1941 and the family relocated to Kimberley and lived in Black Street.



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(Dr Joe Salkinder enlisted in Cape Town and served in Egypt as a medic.) The Segals were from Pietermaritzburg, and Fanny Segal and her seven Segal siblings were born there. Rev Segal and family relocated to Uitenhage and then to Bloemhof when he accepted the position as Reverend to the Bloemhof community (a small town in the Transvaal.) They spent their last years with Louis and Fanny Salkinder in Kimberley. Reverend Segal and his wife passed away a few days apart, and after the war in 1945, and were buried in Kimberley. The rest of the Segal family left for Johannesburg after the war except for Philip Segal, who was working at Salkinder's hardware store. He was a bachelor, and later married Yetti Dryer from Thaba Nchu. They lived in Haddon Court opposite the Perm in Dutoitspan Road.

### 1946 – 1951          Rev A R Abramson

During Rev Abramson's tenure, **cheder classrooms** and a **communal hall** were added in the grounds of the synagogue. These had been desired for many years. The foundation stone (right) was laid by Dr Israel Brodie, the Visiting Chief Rabbi of the British Empire in April 1950. Funds were received from a Mrs Helen Siew (of whom I, Geraldine, had not heard) and the classrooms were called the Helen Siew Talmud Torah. (a fact I was not aware of). These were opened in November 1950 by Gussie Haberfeld, the President at the time. An Ivrit teacher was employed to augment torah and siddur teaching by Rev Abramson and Rev Bloch, in my time. (1950 – 56). Many dances and socials as well as meetings were held in the communal hall which was a great asset to the community. I am sure the classrooms might bring back some mixed cheder memories to many of you.



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## 1952 – 1957 Rabbi CM Bloch

Gwynne Shrire (right) is pictures at her Batmitzvah with Rabbi Bloch in 1953. Gwynne’s Mom decided she should have a batmitzvah but it seems Rabbi Bloch was not too sure what to do. Read Gwynne’s story which includes the first ever Barmitzvah in Kimberley (see link at the end).



Below, Rabbi and Mrs Bloch are seen at the far right at Daphne Gillis née Toubé’s wedding in 1953.



## 1957 – 1970 Rabbi Oscar Werner

Rabbi Werner and his wife Leah served the community for 13 years in its latter heyday when there were many children. He was the one who officiated at my wedding in February 1962.



Here seen at his induction in 1957 in a picture sent by David Diamond are From left David’s father, **Beady Diamond**, **Saul Ginsberg**, **Jack Maresky**, **Dr Leon Maresky**, the tallest in the back-row middle, and next to him on his right **Yankel Pick**. Then we see **Harry Stein**,

## Kimberley Jewry and its religious provision 1873-2020

**Aubrey Sacks** and **Dr Hymie Tockar** in the back-row extreme right. In front are **Rabbi Oscar Werner** and **Chief Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz**. Then we don't know who that is sitting next to **Hilda Hotz** – but as **Dr Harry Wolfsohn** was President of the Congregation at the time (1954 – 61) I am surmising that it is he. (Leon Chonin does not think so and thinks it may have been a visitor from Johannesburg) Hilda was for many years, (after Sam Levine) the Synagogue Secretary.

### The Youth Pageant in the early 1960s with Rabbi and Mrs Werner



#### Back row left to right (14 people)

David Goldberg, Jeffrey Geller, Basil Hummel (KHS boarder from Upington) Jack Klein, Roger David, Dennis Hammer, Colin Kanushefsky, Bernard Werner, Michael Lusman, Louis Awerbuck, David Lenhoff (KHS Boarder from Upington) Ronnie Shapiro, Steven Kurland (KHS boarder from Upington) Leslie Brenner

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Row from back (11)

Raymond Ellis, Shelley Jawno, Cheryl Brown, Barbara Tuch, Lynette Buirski, Jeffrey Sussman, Philip Kretzmar, Beverly Buirski, Jennifer Brown, Shelley Hotz, Brian Levinsohn

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> row from back: (10)

Rabbi Werner, Marjory Tuch, Rosemary Shapiro, Barbara Klein, Malka Werner, Natalie Mehl, Sandra Sussman, Beverley Brenner, Sharon Mehl, Mrs Leah Werner



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### 4<sup>th</sup> row from back (9)

Lesley Talmud, Robin Apter, Hilton Toube, Jeffrey Selman, Jeff Katz (drapery) Sydney Sacks, Seville Chonin, #, Colin Frank

### Front row: (8)

Franklyn Dubowitz, Brian Dubowitz, Selwyn Kanushefsky, David Klein, Brian Jawno, Jules Lusman, Neil Odes, Jonty Sandler

There are stories and tributes to Rabbi and Mrs Werner and their family - the three children Sharon, Bernard and Malka on the family and synagogue pages of the website. Links at the end.

He left Kimberley in 1970, to be spiritual head of the Greenside community in Johannesburg before emigrating to America. His son Bernard, AKA Dov, is a rabbi in Jerusalem.

### 1971 – 1977      **Rev Joseph Matzner and his wife Anita**

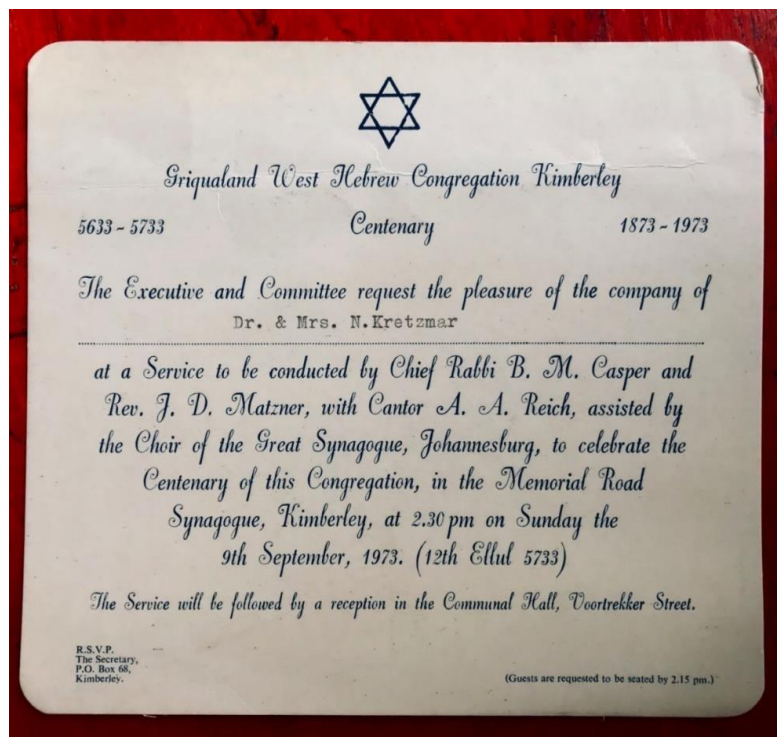
They were the incumbents after Werner. Barney Horwitz writes: Anita is a niece of the late Solly Alufowitz. They have 3 children, Raoul, Andy and Sidel. They left for Port Elizabeth. The Matzners were much loved by the community. They have continued to attend community events around the country such as the unveiling of Sharon Geller's Tombstone on 26 April, 2015 and they attended Ida Horwitz wedding in the Kimberley shul in September 2019.

**Matzner was in post in 1973**, when the community celebrated 100 years since its creation in 1873.

There were civic receptions and the Chief Rabbi Casper and the Choir of the great Synagogue in Johannesburg came to Kimberley.

Here is the official invitation to members and civic dignitaries that my parents received to attend the centenary service.

You can read the booklet compiled by Cyril Haberfeld about the occasion and the history of Kimberley Jewry up to that time and also see the souvenir brochure of the service of thanksgiving to commemorate the event, with messages from the congregation president Nathan Cohen and the Chief Rabbi Casper on the Kimberley Jewish Community website here: [Kimberley Centenary Booklet](#)



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Below is a picture of **Chief Rabbi Casper** and **Rev Matzner** at the service of commemoration from the DFA of 10 Sept 1973.

The caption reads: **Kimberley's Jewish Community yesterday celebrated 100 years of religious life in the city** with a special centenary service at the Memorial Road Synagogue.



Among various dignitaries who attended the service were the Mayor and Mayoress of Kimberley, Councillor LHG Shuttleworth and Mrs Shuttleworth and the Anglican Bishop of Kimberley and Kuruman, the Rt Rev Philip Wheeldon.

The service was conducted by the Chief Rabbi, the Rev (sic) BM Caspar of Johannesburg, pictured right.

**1977 – 1981? Did we not have a minster in these years?**

**1981 – 1984 Rev Copperman and wife Blossom**

Rev and Mrs Copperman came from Salisbury (Harare) in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) (makes a change – usually our ministers were going there) and probably had the best voice of all the Ministers we have had. Real 'opera class' they say. Also, he was a great animal lover who was most famous for responding to a congregant who complained about the presence of Rev Copperman's dog at the daily minyan by saying "HE COMES TO SHUL MORE OFTEN THAN YOU DO".

**1985 – 1988 Rev and Mrs Warman**

They came in 1985 and were in Kimberley for about four years. They started the Newsletter '**Don't be Fariebled**' and then went to Israel. (If anyone has copies of these Newsletters, please get in touch so we can see how to digitize them.)

Anthonette Salkinder writes in 2020: Rev Warman and his wife arrived in Kimberley in 1985. I went to him for my conversion classes, and he was a most wonderful teacher, who could explain not only laws, but gave his insight into Judaism, as philosophy had been one of his majors at

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university. They left Kimberley in December 1987 for Israel, just before he could marry us, as we had to wait three months after I was accepted into the faith to get married.

Luckily Rabbi Desmond Maisels came to Bris my brother in law's Cyril Salkinder son, and he stayed on to marry us under the stars, and the leftovers from the bris became the wedding feast.

She says: I hope the little information was helpful, and today I am so sorry I didn't ask my mother-in-law Fanny Salkinder more about her history, which I gather that she didn't really share. I only have a piece of paper where she wrote down the names of her brothers and their offspring, but there was very little contact after they left Kimberley. (Don't we all feel we should have asked more questions)

### **1988 – 1990            No religious leader?**

June Haberfeld remembers that at about this time there was no religious leader for 2-3 years? when her son Brandon had his barmitzvah although a young Israeli religious lady, came to stay with them for a few months and she taught the cheder children and went through the parsha with Brandon.

### **1990 – 1996            Rev Shmuel and Eunice Kruglak**

Rev Kruglak was popular and made himself known to all the members still in Kimberley. The then Committee, asked him to retire because they estimated the Community would be defunct by the year 2000. How wrong they have been proved to be. He was a great character and radio ham who spoke to the world on his radio rig as much as he spoke to his community.

### **1997 – 2000            Mendel Nisselow**

Mendel was a law student studying through Unisa who served as the minister in Kimberley. An absolutely brilliant young man who went on to score the highest mark in the Northern Provinces board exams for admission as an attorney in 2003 in Johannesburg only to die in tragic circumstances the following year at the age of 27.

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## **Some key personalities who cared for the community**

Before we get to the 21<sup>st</sup> century we need to recognise some very important 20<sup>th</sup> century people who supported the community so magnificently

- **Sam Levine** Secretary
- **Peter Neethling** Caretaker, and his wife **Matilda** who looked after the building and grounds
- **Violet Capon** who tended the garden.

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### **1900 – 1952            Sam Levine Secretary**

Sam served as of the community for over 50 years!! He came out from England in 1900 to take up the post of Secretary to the Congregation. He served in this post full time until 1935 – and after that for another 17 years as part time assistant. Bernard Benjamin remembered that ‘Very often when my mom’s day was done at her college on the Market Square, she would invariably find Sam Levine comfortably waiting in her car for a ride home. In those days, cars were seldom locked...

### **1940 – 1960s            Peter Neethling (with wife Matilda) was the Synagogue Caretaker.**

Bernard Benjamin says ‘I remember him very well as being a thorough gentleman doing errands for the Shul on his bicycle and always wearing a hat. Milton Jawno also remembers Peter and his wife Matilda. He says: They both rendered decades of loyal service to our community. They were coloured gentiles. One particular incident that is imprinted on my mind from circa 1950 is of Peter arriving on his bicycle at 48 Milner Street, the home of my grandmother Mrs Rose Jawno, who was a very pious and saintly woman. He had brought her a lulav and etrog, same having just arrived from the holy land, so that my grandmother could pronounce the blessings, which she duly did at the front door. Thereafter, she returned these items to Peter who mounted his bicycle and rode off.

### **1950 – 1970            Violet Capon – tended the gardens.**

Daughter Vicky says, It is quite true that my mother, Violet Capon did the gardens at the Kimberley Shul. She was very talented with plants and nature and our own garden was beautiful – with fruit trees and grape vines and wonderful flowers! In the shul garden she put in pretty bushes for colour and oversaw that the young man working there did the watering regularly. As we lived around the corner from the shul, she was often there to ‘check up on the garden – and the gardener’.

## **The Young Doctors** (information from Barney Horwitz)

### **From 2001 Young doctors were our spiritual leaders and took the services.**

After the Millennium, the Kimberley community struck up a good plan. Newly qualified doctors had to spend a couple of years in country districts before they could set up practice in big cities. The Kimberley community would negotiate with some Bnei Akiva type young medics who were passionate about religion and capable of running services and offered them, the ministers house (down the road from the hospital) if they would agree to run services at the weekends. This was a great success.

### **2001            Wayne Nates**

Barney Horwitz writes, Wayne Nates was our first Community Service doctor who served us in 2001. From a rabbinical family he made an awesome spiritual leader and went on to become a

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highly respected anaesthetist who currently lives in Toronto, Canada. He married a Canadian girl of South African descent. Best anecdote from his tenure- while doing a short course in Anaesthesia at Free State University he went into the Brandwag Pic 'n Pay and asked the Deli Attendant if they kept any kosher meat to which she replied "certainly we do" and then proceeded to produce ham!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

### **2002 Ryan Karro**

Ryan, a descendant of the great Reb Karro of Sfad in the 1600s, was our second Community Service Doctor who served us in 2002. A wonderful, humble young man who endeared himself to the entire community and is still sadly missed by many. Highly competent as a Doctor he ultimately became a surgeon and lives in Cape Town.

### **2003 Craig Gordon**

Craig was our third community service doctor who served us in 2003. A really amiable soul, Craig not only came to Kimberley for the year but brought his parents with and they stayed on for a few years after he left. Craig emigrated to England and has worked there as a doctor ever since.

### **2004 – 2006 Rael Codron**

Rael was our fourth and longest serving Community service doctor. Rael served us from 2004 through to the end of 2006 and then again in 2010. Rael had a vast knowledge of Judaism the equal of many Rabbis and was immensely popular. He went on to work as a ship's doctor all over the world for many years and about three years back settled in Australia where he works as a specialist emergency medicine practitioner.

### **The Four Barmitzvahs! – January 2005**



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THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN AFTER THE QUADRUPLE BARMITZVAH CELEBRATION IN KIMBERLEY. FROM LEFT: RABBI MOSHE SILBERHAFT, THEN THE FOUR CELEBRANTS, LEON COHEN, RAEI SALKINDER, JULES KATZ, ANTHONY RABIE, AND BARNEY HORWITZ, GOLDIE MEHL AND 'RABBI' RAEI CODRON

Rael Codron was a great success and his tenure culminated in the four bar mitzvahs in January 2005. This was an amazing event (that I, Geraldine, fortuitously gate-crashed as I just happened to be in Kimberley that weekend with my family, not having been told anything about it in advance). As we passed the shul on Friday night, the lights were blazing, the windows open and full-throated song was emanating. I could not believe it. We rushed in only to be warmly greeted by those who still remembered me, and told they were having four Barmitzvahs that weekend! Really? I was sure there were no children left in Kimberley. It turned out it was the doctors' idea of Rael Codron and Rael Salkinder.

The celebrants were **Jules Katz** and **Goldie Mehl** the President, both 83 and celebrating their second barmitzvahs, **Leon Cohen** who had missed out on his barmitzvah through illness and **Anthony Rabie** who, living in the country, had never had the opportunity. What a happy occasion it was. We were invited to join them for supper in the communal hall where I had enjoyed so many communal functions in my youth and childhood, Yom Kippur dances and pageants. I was able to make a little speech and brought greetings from London to the barmitzvah boys. The congregation was made up of the children and grandchildren of the celebrants, as well as the parents and grandparents of the young doctor/rabbis. As we see in the picture above that **Rabbi Silberhaft** was there as well.

### After 2010

Barney Horwitz writes in April 2020: Over the last ten years we have had several groups of young doctors who have spent some time in the city and while not our spiritual leaders they have contributed greatly to the community. Some of the other names that come to mind are **Myron Scopp**, **Bradley Rabin** and **Rael Salkinder**. Following Rael Codron's second departure in 2010 we ran out of Community Service Doctors basically as a result of emigration and since then **Barry Katz** and I (**Barney Horwitz**) have led the services over shabbat. And on every Rosh Hashanah **Nachi Ash** and **Josef Shissler** run our services.

### Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft

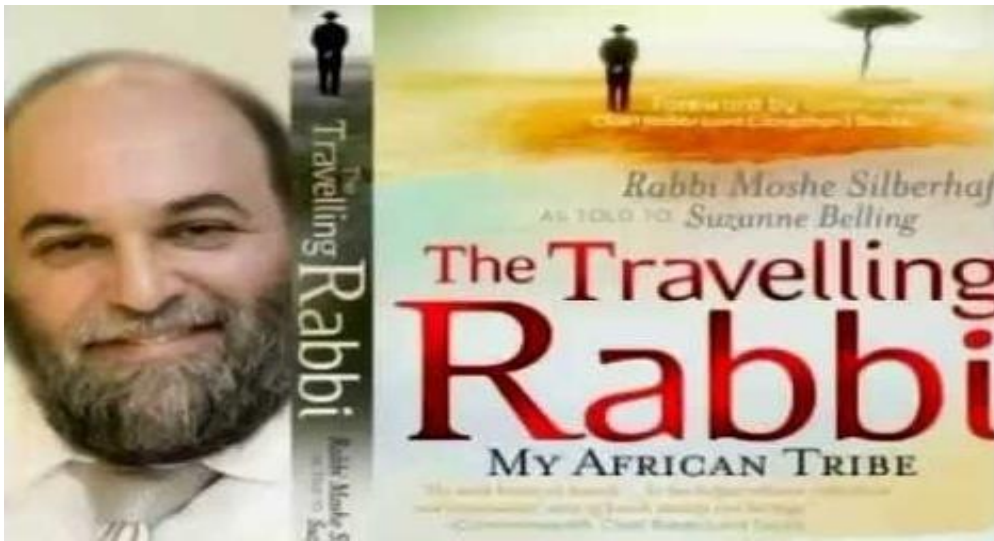
As the Country Communities Rabbi, Moshe Silberhaft is in fact our Official Rabbi says Community Chairman, Barney Horwitz: He has been so since around 1994 when he was first appointed.

**Rabbi Silberhaft** (pictured here on the right with the UK travelling Rabbi to small communities, **Rev Malcolm Weisman OBE**, at the Commonwealth Jewish council meeting in 2005) Rabbi Silberhaft is our first port of call when an officiant is required



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for any life cycle event such as a bris, barmitzvah, wedding or funeral or any halachic question needs to be answered.



He is a great friend of our community and was the man who found us Nachi Ash and Josef Shissler and his son Yossie who now lives in Israel also used to come to us over the High Holy days when he was in High School in South Africa.

Recently he was appointed as the National Director of the Small Jewish Communities Association of South Africa, of which I am the first Chairman. We look forward to a long and mutually rewarding relationship with Rav Silberhaft.

### Yeshiva Bochers for the High Holydays

#### From 2001 Yeshiva Bochers for the High Holydays

Since 2001 the community has benefitted from the services of **Nachi Ash** and **Yosef Shissler** who first came down to run the High Holiday services in 2001. This has been a real metziah!. Chairman Barney Horwitz writes: 'Nachi and Josef and their wives have been coming every year since 2001. Both come from Rabbinical families and in day-to-day life Nachi is an Accountant and Josef a family law specialist attorney.

Their dedication to keeping our High Holy days services going is unique. Every year they come with their wives, children and around five other families and another five single men. Their services are superb and run like clockwork. On Yom Kippur we always get to the break by 1.30 pm which is remarkable and their harmonies and the spirit they engender in the shul with their humour is something to experience.

Very few *Shuls* in South Africa are as warm and happy as ours at this time of the year. Recently we had visitors from big congregations in the US and Israel who shared in our Shabbat service they took before the recent wedding of my daughter Ida and Zach, and all our guests commented on the wonderful spirit they generate. They create a wonderful chassidishe atmosphere such as Kimberley probably never experienced in its more serious hey-day.

### 2012: The 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Memorial Road Synagogue

In 2012 – the community celebrated the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Memorial Road Synagogue.

The commemorative programme was organized under the combined auspices of the **African Jewish Congress (AJC)**, the **South African Jewish Board of Deputies** and the **Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation**. It was the brainchild of AJC President **Mervyn Smith**. It kicked off with a *Maariv* service in the synagogue, with Spiritual Leader **Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft** officiating. In the picture below right at that momentous event are I-r MERVYN SMITH – ANN HARRIS – ARNOLD RAUFF – LI BOISKIN – IRENE ZUCKERMAN – BARNEY HORWITZ – RABBI MOSHE SILBERHAFT

Afterwards, delegates and participants were joined by some forty members of the local community at the William Humphrey Art Gallery, where a special exhibition of works by Jewish artists in the gallery's collection were on display. The latter included over seventy works by, amongst others, such renowned artists as Irma Stern, Lippy Lipschitz and Moses Kotler.

Community leaders **Barney Horwitz** and **David Allen** spoke on the history of the congregation, from the first settler onwards. Chevra Kadisha chairman **Arnold Rauff** entertained the audience with an amusing series of anecdotes and vignettes relating to Jewish life in the area. The next day was devoted to visiting sites of local historical interest, including a guided tour of the **Magersfontein battlefield** and a “virtual mining experience” the Kimberley Mining Museum and Big Hole.

**Chaim Ehrich** led the Shabbat evening services, which were followed by a communal dinner in the communal hall. Speakers included AJC President **Mervyn**





## Kimberley Jewry and its religious provision 1873-2020

**Smith**, SAJBD Cape Region Chairwoman **Li Boiskin**, Former Chief Rebbetzin **Ann Harris**, and the chairwoman of the African Region for the International Council of Jewish Women, **Irene Zuckerman**. A common theme that emerged from the ensuing comments from the floor was how, in a small community, every individual counted to a much greater extent than was the case in places like Johannesburg, where one could easily become just a statistic.

**Ann Harris** widow of the late Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, paid tribute: "While it is sad that a community of such stature, one of the first bastions of Jewish life in South Africa, has suffered an inevitable decline in numbers, all who took part were delighted to be able to support and salute those who still keep the *shul* alive and to marvel at their optimism, their resilience and their loyalty to our traditions". There was a joyous atmosphere at all the Shabbat services, with full Shabbat morning services including the Torah reading being held in the *shul* for the first time in years. Currently, the congregation holds services on Erev Shabbat, the High Holidays, and on special occasions. On Saturday night, **Trevor and Hubre Datnow** hosted over sixty participants for a *braai* at their farm, Marrick. The weekend's activities concluded with visits to the city's two Jewish cemeteries, where **Rabbi Silberhaft** intoned hazkarot, followed by a communal brunch in the shul hall. You can see the SABC Simcha programme coverage of this event at the last link below

There are many more links you may want to follow up on ministers or families below:

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**Thanks for information and pictures to:** **Cyril Haberfeld's** booklet on the history of the community on the occasion of its centenary in 1973 [Kimberley Centenary Booklet](#) and **Barney Horwitz**, the present Chairman of the Community who has provided information from 1973 to now. Also, thanks to Louis Herrman's, A History of The Jews in South Africa, Brian Robert's books on Kimberley, and information from **Laura Konviser**, **Leon Chonin**, **June Haberfeld**, **Anthonette Salkinder**, **Jean-Paul Burke** and others. We have been particularly lucky to have received transcripts of interviews with **Bernard Wulf** and **Gussie Haberfeld** from the **UCT Kaplan Centre**

- Read about the synagogues on the 'synagogue' pages
- Click here to see the plaque and read more about the Mendelssohn family [Mendelssohn, Rev Meyer & his son, Sidney](#)
- You can read more about [Gustave Bonas](#) himself, a member of the original diamond syndicate (see above) and his beautiful house Lilianville, in Lodge Road
- Read Gus's story here where he describes the attitudes and activities of different communities : [Haberfeld, Gus & Family](#).
- Read the Maresky story [Maresky, Jack, Shim & Helen](#))
- Read the story Gwynne's great Grandfather [Senderovitz, Raphael](#)

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- The travelling Rabbi from page 140. [Moshe Silberhaft's Kimberley chapter.](#)
- You can read more about Rev Konviser's Kimberley sojourn – here [Konviser, Rev Maurice](#) opening West End Cemetery in 1929 with William Sagar [Sagar, William and Family](#) and being the minister to the Mayor of Kimberley Barney Cohen in 1931. [Cohen, Barnerd \(Barney\)](#)  
See my story of Alfred Beit, on the website under 'pioneers' or here [https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Alfred\\_Beit.html](https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Alfred_Beit.html) for the exciting story of early Kimberley and the amalgamation.
- Read the full story of Rev Harris Isaacs on the website, See links at the bottom of the articles here: [https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Rev\\_Isaacs.html](https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Rev_Isaacs.html)
- See pictures on the website under family weddings (links at the end) [family weddings.](#)
- [https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Alfred\\_Beit.html](https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kimberley/Alfred_Beit.html)
- You can read Leon Chonin's tribute to Rev Goldberg on this link: [Goldberg, Rev Chaim, Tribute by Leon Chonin](#)
- You can read Leon Chonin's tribute to his grandfather Lipi Weinstein too [Weinstein, Lipi and Hannah \(nee Erlich\)](#)
- There are stories and tributes to Rabbi Werner and their family - the three children Sharon, Bernard and Malka on the website here: [Werner, Rabbi Oscar, Tributes by Leon Chonin & Bernard Werner](#)
- Click on these names to see wonderful galleries of pictures of the memorial Road synagogue:  
[Shawn Benjamin](#)   [David Jawno](#)   [Marvin Cohen](#)   [Alon Berman](#)   [Jono David](#)
- Read about the 4 Barmitzvahs here: <https://www.africanjewishcongress.com/ncrsa2.htm>
- You can see the SABC Simcha programme coverage of this event here <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=labuYuh4bRs>